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Nos. 1-7

Colonization societies

V. 2, Nos. 1-7

**BRIEF STATEMENT OF FACTS,
SHEWING THE
RISE, PROGRESS AND NECESSITY
OF
AFRICAN COLONIZATION;**

ADDRESSED TO THOSE

Citizens of the State of Virginia,

*Who may not have correct information on the subject,—with a short
Appeal in favour of the cause.*

BY D. M^CKENNEY,

AGENT OF THE

Virginia State Colonization Society.

WHAT shall be done with our free colored population? How shall we fairly dispose of them, and of such of our slaves as may hereafter, “under the laws of this commonwealth,” become free?

These are important questions, well deserving the most serious attention of all classes of the community; and which have, in fact, engaged for a long series of years, the thoughts of many of our best and greatest men.

The evils of a mixed population, under which we now labour, were foreseen as early as 1772. In that year the House of Burgesses of this state, inspired with a just abhorrence of the slave trade, and an almost prophetic foresight of the scourge it would entail upon their posterity, unanimously agreed upon an address to the king of Great Britain, praying him “to remove those restraints on the Governors of the colony which inhibited them from assenting to such laws as might check so very pernicious a commerce.”

“The importation of slaves into the colony, from the Coast of Africa, has long been considered as a trade of great inhumanity; and under its encouragement, we have too much reason to fear *will endanger the very existence of your Majesty’s American dominions.*

“We are sensible that some of your Majesty’s subjects in Great Britain, may reap emolument from this sort of traffic; but when we consider that it greatly retards the settlement of the colonies with more

white inhabitants, and may *in time*, have the most *destructive influence*, we presume to hope that the interests of a *few* will be disregarded, when placed in competition with the *security* and *happiness* of such numbers of your Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects."

This spirited address, although prophetic of the dangerous consequences which would inevitably ensue from a blind persistence in the most nefarious traffic that ever disgraced the annals of man, was *disregarded*. The trade remained unrestrained until the declaration of independence, when Virginia and some other states, prohibited it altogether.

Happy would it have been for us and our children, if the sound sentiments displayed by the House of Burgesses of 1772, had not lost their influence in 1787, when the federal constitution was formed. By that instrument, Congress was prohibited from passing laws to prevent the importation of slaves for twenty years. This shows the liability of man to error; for in consequence of this most "unfortunate legitimization of the slave trade, it was carried on for *twenty years* upon a large scale, and has sown a seed which has germinated with fatal fertility, and threatens a dreadful retribution."

The spirit of the "Burgesses" of 1772, however, has never slept, though for a while it certainly *slumbered*.

As early as 1777, we find Thomas Jefferson turning his attention to the domestic economy of his country, and actually forming a plan to remove, or undermine by *gradual* degrees the threatening evil, the portentous cloud of future collision.

That plan was *colonization*; and although the particulars of it cannot now be given, it is believed that he contemplated the removal of the free colored population of the country, to some of our western vacant lands. Be that, however, as it may, the project failed, owing doubtless, in part to the distractions and difficulties of the war of independence, and in part, to the novelty and magnitude of the undertaking.

Subsequent events, and additional light, induce the belief, that that failure should not be regretted—leaving out of the question, the probable *future* danger of such an establishment within, or even contiguous to any of our western states or territorial governments; other considerations, of *great weight*, of *immense interest*, induce a ready acquiescence in that failure.

To Mr. Jefferson however, justly belongs the praise of *first* moving in the cause of colonization, as the only *practicable* and fair remedy of rendering equal justice to all concerned.

Doctor Thomas Thornton, in 1787, adopting Mr. Jefferson's idea of colonization, as the only possible mode of conferring upon the free people of color, *all the blessings* of freedom, formed a plan for establishing a colony on the Western Coast of Africa, and published an address to those residing in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, inviting them to accompany him thither. A sufficient number of them agreed to go, and were prepared for the expedition—but this project failed for want of the necessary funds.

In 1800, or 1801, the Legislature of Virginia, inheriting a portion of the spirit of the House of Burgesses of 1772, and being deeply

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 30 impressed with a sense of the indispensable necessity of seeking some mode of relief, from the growing evils, consequent upon the rapid increase of her colored population, determined, in *secret session*, to move in the cause. The then Governor of the state, Mr. Monroe, was instructed to apply to the President of the United States, and "urge him to institute negotiations with some of the European powers possessed of colonies on the *Coast of Africa*, to grant an asylum to which our emancipated negroes might be sent."

Mr. Jefferson opened a negotiation with the Sierra Leone Company of London, who had made a settlement on the Western Coast of Africa, but without success. He subsequently applied to the government of Portugal, but in vain. His negotiations were then abandoned as hopeless.

In 1816 the Legislature took up the subject again—and although the lapse of fifteen years had given additional difficulty to it—although the evil sought to be remedied had taken a deeper hold in the soil, and was fast sending its venomous fangs into the very life's blood of her health and prosperity, so far from looking upon this as an argument for passive submission, it seems to have inspired her with additional ardour and renewed zeal in the cause.

The following resolution, which was passed by a large majority, shows the tone of her legislative feeling upon the subject, and may be considered as a good earnest of what it will do, when the sovereign people move in the cause.

"Whereas, The General Assembly of Virginia have repeatedly sought to obtain an asylum, beyond the limits of the United States, for such persons of color as had been, or might be emancipated under the laws of this Commonwealth, but have hitherto found all their efforts frustrated, either by the disturbed state of other nations, or domestic causes equally unpropitious to its success: they now avail themselves of a period, when peace has healed the wounds of humanity, and the principal nations of Europe have concurred with the government of the United States, in abolishing the African Slave Trade, (a traffic which this Commonwealth, both before and since the revolution, zealously sought to terminate) to renew this effort:—

And do therefore Resolve, That the Executive be requested to correspond with the President of the United States, for the purpose of obtaining a territory on the coast of Africa, or at some other place, not within any of the States, or territorial governments of the United States, to serve as an *asylum* for such persons of color as are *now free*, and may desire the same, and for those who may hereafter be emancipated within this Commonwealth—and that the Senators and Representatives in the Congress of the United States, be requested to exert their best efforts to aid the President of the United States in the attainment of the above objects—provided that no contract or arrangement for such territory shall be obligatory on this Commonwealth, until ratified by the Legislature."

By one of those remarkable coincidences which so strongly indicate a superior presiding intelligence, whose purposes of benevolence are commensurate with the wants and the miseries of the world, it so happened, that in December 1816, a considerable number of citizens

from different States, having had their attention drawn to the subject by the untiring exertions of the late Rev'd. Doctor Findly of New Jersey, and other gentlemen of high distinction, met in the city of Washington to take into consideration the practicability of the plan, which had been so *frequently* and *ardently* recommended by *Virginia*. A meeting was organized by calling the Hon. Bushrod Washington to the Chair.—*Long, earnest* and eloquent debates ensued.—Henry Clay, John Randolph of Roanoke, and other powerful orators addressed the meeting in favor of the plan—and it is worthy of remark, that the last named gentleman, under the inspiring influence of his own eloquence, or enraptured with the prospect of the great amount of good that the cause, *successfully prosecuted*, would confer both upon his country, and the colored population thereof, said, “if a place could be provided for their reception, and a mode of sending them hence, there were hundreds, nay thousands, who would by manumitting their slaves, relieve themselves from the cares attendant on their possession.” At this meeting, a letter from Mr. Jefferson, dated in 1811, was read, in which, having mentioned his negotiations with Sierra Leone and Portugal, he adds, “indeed nothing is more desirable than that the United States would themselves undertake to make such an establishment on the coast of Africa.”

A Society, patronized by distinguished citizens from many States was then formed, and was called

“The American Colonization Society, for colonizing with their own consent, the free people of color of the United States, upon the Western Coast of Africa.”

The Hon. Bushrod Washington was appointed President;—and Messrs. Crawford, Clay, Rutgers, Howard and others, Vice-Presidents.

So much for the rise of this truly important Institution.

ITS PROGRESS.

Owing to the want of funds, and the necessity of precautionary movements in a cause so great, upon which was deemed to hang the ultimate prosperity of the country, the experiment of its practicability was not fairly made until 1821 and '22.

Great doubts were entertained by multitudes of the possibility of acquiring a suitable territory in Africa,—others doubted whether the free blacks would *ever consent to go*; and others again, and they formed a large class, turned the whole scheme into ridicule, and called its warmest advocates utopians—amiable enthusiasts, and quixotic adventurers.

But how stands the case *now*?

From 1821 to 1831, a period of ten years, the Society has purchased a territory on the Western Coast of Africa, extending coast-wise 280 miles, and running high up into the interior.

The territory at present under the *actual jurisdiction* of the Society, extends from Grand Cape Mount to Trade Town, a distance of 150 miles.—It abounds with the richest varieties of flesh, fish, and fowl—and *greater* varieties of fruits and vegetables than are found in the most favored West-India Islands.

The Colonists, in their address to their brethren in the United States, say, "a more fertile soil, and a more productive country, so far as it is cultivated, there is not we believe on the face of the earth"—"sugar—cotton—coffee and indigo grow wild."

The climate is so peculiarly adapted to the health of emigrants from our Middle and Southern States, that not more than *one* in *forty*, have died in FIVE YEARS, from change of climate.

The territory is called Liberia—and the principal town, or capital, which is located in about the 6th degree of North latitude, upon Cape Montserado, is called, after the late President Monroe, *Monrovia*.

The entire population of the colony is rising *two thousand*.—Monrovia contains the largest number—all in the enjoyment of liberty,—and advancing with unexampled rapidity in knowledge, industry, agriculture, commerce, the mechanic arts, sobriety, and religion.

Foreigners—and our own citizens, and *commanders* of our *national* ships, who have visited Monrovia, speak and write of it as presenting one of the most interesting spectacles they have ever beheld—the order—sobriety—industry and application to business, shewn by its citizens, is probably *unexampled* in the history of colonies.

Thus has the Society demonstrated, first, the practicability of securing a suitable territory in Africa—and second, the practicability of making a settlement of voluntary emigrants.

And those emigrants, whose faculties while they were in this country were actually *benumbed* by reason of the necessary political, and other disabilities with which they were oppressed, have manifested a *capability* of *expansion* of *intellect*, and of *moral culture*, which most forcibly demonstrates their relationship to the great mass of mankind.

The Legislatures of fifteen States have passed resolutions approving the objects of the Institution, and the Legislature of Maryland, in 1831, appropriated *two hundred thousand dollars*, to aid such of her free colored population as might choose to emigrate to Liberia, or elsewhere.

There are seventeen State Societies, Auxiliary to the Parent Institution at Washington, and more than two hundred Auxiliary to these.

So much for the rise and progress of this cause to the present time.

The necessity of *increasing* and *untiring exertions*, upon a more *enlarged scale* is, or ought to be obvious to all reflecting persons.

Considered as a mere matter of *State policy*, it is an undertaking of unexampled importance. What congeniality of feeling, of design and of interest is there between the free colored population and the whites? None—*no, not the smallest*. Is not this made as clear as day, by the character of our police regulations? But some may say these very regulations have produced the unfriendly tone of feeling and conduct which exist in that part of our population. But this is not true. The cause of that feeling is of more ancient date and of deeper dye than any legislative enactments. It is found in the *North* as well as in the *South*, in the *East* as well as in the *West*. *It is in their color*. They know it—they feel it. It is that which presents an eternal barrier to any thing like cordiality of feeling and unity of interest, while they remain among us.

The mournful issue of the recent occurrences in this Commonwealth, speaks volumes in favor of the cause. And when it is considered that this State contains more than *one-fifth* of the entire colored population of the United States, between whom and ourselves nothing like perfect cordiality can ever exist, surely every man will feel himself bound zealously to aid in gradually removing those who are now free, and such as may hereafter become free.

But the benevolent purpose of the scheme is not limited to the confines of one continent, nor to the prosperity of a solitary race. For while it will, under suitable patronage, gradually remove from our own borders a growing evil, it promises to Africa the ultimate payment of a debt so long due to her. A debt in men, money and morals.

It has already effected a greater amount of good in arresting and putting down the slave trade from Grand Cape Mount to Trade Town, embracing a coast distance of one hundred and fifty miles, than ten times the value of the money which has been expended in the purchase of the territory, and in the transportation thither of more than two thousand emigrants.

A beacon fire is now kindled at Monrovia,---and from the lofty cape of Montserado, a broad blaze of light is shining forth into the darkest recesses of Africa. Already have her children sprung into new life, and disdaining their former mode of living, are earnestly pressing for liberty to become *fellow citizens* with our liberated slaves. Turning away with disgust and horror from the traffic in each others blood, to which they were reduced by a necessity *entailed* upon them by the *agency* of our own color, they are now cultivating their own rich soil, dressing and pruning their own luxuriant palm trees, and bearing to Monrovia, to Millsburg and to Caldwell the fruits of their honest industry, for barter and trade. Gradually losing their relish for savage life, their children are learning in the schools of the colony, the language, the customs, the mechanic arts and the religion of our emancipated slaves, who in their turn, are *laying the foundation* for an *empire of republics*, breathing the spirit of our own happy institutions.

The plan opens to the patriotic a large field of glorious action. It cheers the heart of the philanthropist, and furnishes to the christian philosopher another developement of those mysterious plans of Divine Providence, by which he will effect all the purposes of his unlimited benevolence, and bring order out of disorder, and everlasting good out of temporary evil.

Now is the time for action—the work can be done. Away then with all cold hearted calculations of cost and of difficulty. Had the fathers of our revolution reasoned thus, where would we, their children, now be? Either contending single handed with the despotism of Europe for liberty, or with our high faculties *benumbed*, delighting ourselves with the favours of royalty, and dancing to the rattling of our chains. But they reasoned not thus—they saw the prize, and said we will secure it for ourselves and for our children, cost what it may.

It is readily granted, that voluntary contributions *alone* will not be sufficient to carry on the cause as *rapidly* as it *ought now to advance*.

Much, even *more* than was expected by its warmest friends, has been done by private aid. In demonstrating the practicability of securing a sufficient territory in Africa—in planting a colony of *voluntary* emigrants—in making it plain to the free blacks themselves, that it is their highest interest to emigrate, that by so doing they will advance and establish upon an *immoveable basis* the *independence* and *happiness* of their color; the Society has vanquished all the original difficulties which were thrown in the way, and have earned for the cause the right to claim all that aid which it now needs and seeks from those states who are more immediately interested in its complete success.

The way for *state legislative* action and aid is now fairly opened. Maryland has availed herself of the opportunity, and with a liberality worthy of universal imitation, has appropriated two hundred thousand dollars to be expended in aid of such of her free colored population as may choose to emigrate.

And will not Virginia, whose House of Burgesses of 1772, foresaw and endeavored by a spirited address to the king of Great Britain to prevent the evil, *now* take up the cause? Will not *Virginia*, whose Jefferson in 1777, *originated the plan of colonization*, and whose legislature in 1801, and again in 1816, pressed it upon the general government with an ardour and a zeal shewing the magnitude of the cause, now arise and give to it the aid it seeks? She stands committed upon the question, and nothing is now wanted but the united action of the people—their voice is with her legislature, an authority of resistless force.

Let the people then in all the counties of the state form themselves into societies, auxiliary to the Virginia State Society at Richmond, and let those societies instruct their delegates and senators, and memorialize the legislature, and the cause will prevail.

The state contains something less than forty-eight thousand free colored persons. Many of them are *panting* for an opportunity to become citizens of Liberia. Let the State but favor the cause with a liberal appropriation for ten successive years, and such changes will take place in all the various departments of our domestic economy as will *surprize and delight every man*, and will doubtless lead *succeeding generations* to continue the plan until every object of the warmest philanthropist will be fully realized.

Although the object of the Society is the removal *only* of such as are now free, and of such as may hereafter become free, it may not be out of place to remark here, that, should it ever be the pleasure of the people to agree to give up their slaves, or their increase, *they could not do so if this Society should become extinct*. They could not do so, if the cause of colonization be even *now suffered to languish*.

Should it ever be made plain to the citizens by their own experience or observation, that they could do much better *without* them than they are now doing *with* them, they would nevertheless be *obliged to keep them, or send them to Liberia*.

It is in this way, and in this way *only*, that colonization societies, both in the north and in the south, touch the delicate question of slavery.

The Parent Society at Washington, with the aid of its auxiliaries,

has prepared an asylum for all that are now free, and for such as may hereafter be made free. It has, in a word, fully accomplished the objects of the resolution of the legislature of 1816.

In the hope that many who may read this "brief statement," may be disposed to become *active* friends of the cause, the writer has added the form of a Constitution for an Auxiliary Society.

Norfolk, Va., Sept. 20, 1832.

FORM OF A CONSTITUTION FOR AN AUXILIARY SOCIETY.

Article 1.---This Society shall be called the Colonization Society, and shall be auxiliary to the objects of the Virginia State Colonization Society at Richmond.

Article 2.---The object to which it shall be exclusively directed, shall be to aid the parent institution at Richmond in the colonization of the free colored people of the State of Virginia, with their own consent, on the coast of Africa.

Article 3.---An annual subscription of one dollar or upwards, shall constitute an individual a member of the society, and the payment at any one time of dollars, a member for life.

Article 4.---The officers of the Society shall be President, Vice President, Managers, a Secretary and Treasurer, to be elected at the annual meeting of the society, by the members thereof.

Article 5.---The President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer shall be ex-officio members of the Board of Managers.

Article 6.---The Board of Managers shall transact the business of the Society, and fill all vacancies in their number, shall constitute a quorum.

Article 7.---The Treasurer shall keep the accounts and take charge, subject to the order and regulations of the Board of Managers, of the funds of the Society.

Article 8.---The Secretary shall keep records of the proceedings, the names of members and amount of subscriptions, and conduct the correspondence of the Society.

Article 9.---The President, or in his absence the Vice President, or in his absence any three of the Managers may call a meeting of the Society.

Article 10.---The Society may elect a delegate to attend the annual meeting in January of the Parent Society at Richmond.

Article 11.---The annual meeting of the Society shall be held on the day of in or at

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